



CITY OF ONEIDA COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date:	August 11, 2026	Presiding:	Rick Rossi, Mayor
Time:	5:30pm	Clerk:	Sandy LaPera, City Clerk
Location:	Common Council Chambers	Meeting Type:	Regular ☐ Special ☒

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rick Rossi, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

Attendees

	Present	Absent	Arrived Late
Mayor Rossi	☒	☐	☐ : _____
City Manager Lovell	☒	☐	☐ : _____
Councilor McHugh	☒	☐	☐ : _____
Councilor Cimpi	☒	☐	☐ : _____
Councilor Smith	☒	☐	☐ : _____
Councilor Jones	☒	☐	☐ : _____
Councilor Pagano	☐	☐	☒ : 5:32
Councilor Simchik	☒	☐	☐ : _____

Also Present

City Attorney Bell	☐	Supervisor: Brandee Henderson	☒
Attorney (Other)	☐	Supervisor: _____	☐
Fire Chief Jones	☐	Planning Dir. S. Vonderweidt	☒
Police Chief Lowell	☐	Parks & Rec Dir. L. Griff	☒

**RESOLUTION APPROVING THE REVISED 30% DESIGN SUBMISSION FOR THE VETERANS
MEMORIAL PARK DRI PROJECT AND AUTHORIZING ADVANCEMENT TO FINAL DESIGN**

RESOLUTION 26-114

Moved by Councilor Simchik

Seconded by Councilor Jones

WHEREAS, the City of Oneida received a Downtown Revitalization Initiative award for improvements to Veterans Memorial Park, including recreational, accessibility, bathhouse, court, and veterans memorial improvements; and

WHEREAS, the Common Council previously authorized the Veterans Memorial Park DRI project to proceed into the design phase; and

WHEREAS, the City retained C&S Engineers, Inc. to prepare preliminary 30% design documents for the Veterans Memorial Park DRI project; and

WHEREAS, C&S Engineers prepared a 16-page drawing package entitled “**Revised 30% Design Submission,**” dated April 30, 2026, C&S Project No. E42.003.001, depicting the proposed project improvements, including:

1. A new splash pad and associated site, grading, and utility improvements;
2. Conversion and improvement of the existing courts for pickleball and continued basketball use;
3. A revised Veterans Memorial area containing six granite monuments, six flagpoles, accessible walkways, landscaping, and related site improvements; and
4. Renovations and accessibility improvements to the pool-complex restrooms; and

WHEREAS, the revised 30% design drawings are marked “**Preliminary—Not for Construction**” and are intended to establish the project’s approved scope and design direction before preparation of final construction documents; and

WHEREAS, the revised memorial design depicted in the drawing package is a complete memorial capable of standing independently without the acquisition, placement, mounting, or installation of an aircraft; and

WHEREAS, no aircraft is depicted or included in the revised 30% design submission, and any future aircraft display shall remain financially and administratively separate from the DRI-funded project and subject to separate Common Council authorization; and

WHEREAS, formal approval of the revised 30% design will provide clear and unified direction to the City’s administration and project consultants and allow the project to advance without further unnecessary redesign, delay, or additional consultant expense;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Oneida hereby approves the Veterans Memorial Park DRI **Revised 30% Design Submission dated April 30,**

2026, C&S Project No. E42.003.001, attached hereto and incorporated herein as **Exhibit A**; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Exhibit A shall constitute the Common Council's approved design direction for the Veterans Memorial Park DRI project and shall serve as the basis for advancing the project into final design, preparation of sealed construction documents, Department of State review, and preparation of public bidding documents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Manager is authorized to direct and coordinate C&S Engineers, Inc., the Department of Planning, Development and Codes, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and other appropriate City personnel in advancing the approved design through the remaining design, regulatory-review, and procurement processes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Manager and project consultants may make minor technical, engineering, accessibility, code-compliance, regulatory, or administrative modifications during final design, provided that such modifications do not materially alter the principal project components approved by this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any proposed material alteration to the approved design, including removal of a principal project component, relocation of a principal project component, or substantial redistribution of the project scope, shall be returned to the Common Council for formal consideration and direction; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution does not constitute approval of final construction documents, acceptance of a public bid, award of a construction contract, commencement of construction, or authorization of expenditures beyond funds otherwise appropriated and authorized by the Common Council; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that no DRI funding shall be used for the acquisition, transportation, preparation, mounting, foundation, crane work, installation, or other aircraft-specific expense associated with any future static aircraft display unless separately presented to and expressly authorized by the Common Council; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall take effect immediately.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

DISCUSSION: Director of Planning and Development Steve Vonderweidt reviewed a handout providing updates on the City's DRI projects, with particular emphasis on the Veterans Memorial Field project. All materials related to the presentation are available on the City's website via the following link: https://oneidacityny.gov/departments/city_clerk/agendas_meetings.php

The City Manager provided clarification regarding the project cost estimates, explaining that the earlier \$1.7 million estimate reflected the initial project wish list developed following the August site walk. That concept included additional amenities and higher-cost design elements, including

the bathrooms and bathhouse. Following input from the Common Council and recommendations from the engineering team, the project scope was revised with greater consideration given to available funding. The resulting 30% design, included in the Council packet, has an estimated cost of approximately \$1.058 million.

Council discussed opportunities to secure additional outside funding for the project. The City Manager reported that outreach had been made to the Gorman and Chapman foundations regarding potential contributions, although no response had yet been received. Councilor Jones indicated that the Chapman Foundation may accept applications on a rolling basis and offered to provide the application information.

The City Manager further reported that the City is actively pursuing grant opportunities to supplement available project funding, including the SWIMS grant for aquatic improvements and the Kicks grant for the AYSO fields. City Manager Lovell thanked Councilor McHugh for suggesting the Kicks grant opportunity, noting that it aligned well with the AYSO field improvements and was positively received by the City's state partners. He noted that additional grant funding could allow the City to incorporate additional project elements and were being aggressively pursued.

In response to a question from Councilor McHugh regarding a required City contribution, the City Manager explained that the original project scope contemplated a 20% local match using ARPA funds; however, those funds are no longer committed to the project. The revised design was therefore developed to remain within the approximately \$1.059 million project funding currently available, without relying upon an additional City match.

Mayor Rossi discussed the importance of including restroom facilities and the possibility of seeking contributions from local businesses or other private funding sources to help support that portion of the project.

**RECEIVE AND FILE THE MAYOR'S WRITTEN OBJECTIONS PURSUANT TO SECTION 3.7(B) OF THE
ONEIDA CITY CHARTER**

RESOLUTION 26-115

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, receive and place on file written objections from Mayor Rossi to Resolution 26-113 from August 4, 2026, pursuant to Section 3.7(B) of the Oneida City Charter.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 2 (McHugh/Smith)

Absent: 0

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor Smith stated that, in his interpretation, the provisions of Section 3.7(B) apply only after a resolution, or order has been passed by the Common Council. He emphasized that he had no objection to the matter being brought back before the Council for reconsideration; rather, his concern was that the resolution cited Section 3.7(B) in a manner he believed was not applicable to the circumstances.

City Manager Lovell clarified that the matter was being brought back before the Common Council pursuant to Section 3.7(B) of the City Charter, rather than under the Mayor's veto authority contained in Section 3.7(A). He stated that he had consulted with City Attorney Nadine Bell regarding the appropriate procedure and that the resolution and agenda item were prepared based upon that legal guidance. Mayor Rossi concurred, noting that he had also sought legal advice regarding the matter prior to its placement on the agenda.

Council discussed the distinction between the Mayor's veto authority and the separate authority under Section 3.7(B) to submit written objections following Council action and return the matter to the Common Council for reconsideration. Additional discussion was held regarding the Mayor's veto authority under the City's current City Manager form of government and whether the Charter provisions may warrant further review in the future.

RECONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION 26-113 FROM AUGUST 4, 2026

RESOLUTION 26-116

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, to approve the budget transfers and amendments as set forth in Resolution 26-113, originally considered and rejected on August 4, 2026.

		<u>To</u>	<u>From</u>
2026 Budget Adjustments			
\$	39,400.00	001.1640.0401.0000	001.0001.0912.0000
		Gasoline	General Fund Balance
\$	42,300.00	001.1640.0402.0000	001.0001.0912.0000
		Diesel	General Fund Balance

To allocate funds for the fuel needs expected through 12/31/26

AMENDMENT

Councilor Smith moved to amend the proposed budget transfers by reducing the transfers for Gasoline and Diesel to \$20,000 each. The motion was seconded by Councilor McHugh.

		<u>To</u>	<u>From</u>
2026 Budget Adjustments			
\$	20,000	001.1640.0401.0000 Gasoline	001.0001.0912.0000 General Fund Balance
\$	20,000	001.1640.0402.0000 Diesel	001.0001.0912.0000 General Fund Balance

To allocate funds for the fuel needs expected through 12/31/26

DISCUSSION:

Discussion followed regarding the identification of other available budget lines that could potentially be used to address the fuel shortfall rather than drawing the full amount from the General Fund. Council members discussed year-to-date balances in various budget lines, while the City Manager cautioned that many expenditures are seasonal or occur later in the year and that unused appropriations ultimately return to the General Fund.

The City Manager explained that the Comptroller had previously reviewed the budget for available funding and had not identified sufficient unused funds. He further clarified that administrative transfers are limited to accounts within the applicable budget classification, while transfers from other areas would require Council authorization through a budget amendment or transfer.

Council discussed the timing of the fuel shortage, the original fuel appropriations, increases in gasoline and diesel costs, and the reductions made during the prior budget process. The City Manager stated that the fuel lines had been underbudgeted as part of efforts to meet the Council-directed budget target and that subsequent increases in fuel costs further affected the available appropriations.

Councilor Jones indicated that her intent was not necessarily to eliminate programs or services, but to allow the administration additional time to examine City operations and determine whether efficiencies or changes in the way services are provided could produce savings. She expressed confidence that operational adjustments might be identified without simply eliminating individual programs or activities.

The City Manager agreed that operational efficiencies should continue to be explored and reported that he had implemented a weekly fuel tracking system, with fuel reports to be generated each Thursday. He established a targeted goal of approximately a 20% reduction in fuel consumption across City departments and stated that fuel conservation measures would remain in effect through the end of the year, and longer, if necessary, regardless of whether additional funding was transferred.

The City Manager further stated that department heads have been directed to closely monitor spending and justify expenditure, with the goal of preserving available funds wherever possible. He reported that approximately \$273,000 in General Fund balance had been used to date, compared with approximately \$1.6 million the previous year, representing an approximately 81%

reduction. He attributed the reduction to increased fiscal discipline by department heads and continued monitoring and coordination with the Comptroller and City staff, emphasizing that the prior year's level of General Fund balance usage was not sustainable.

The City Clerk clarified that, because the proposed budget transfer contained separate gasoline and diesel appropriations, the motion to amend the total transfer to \$40,000 needed to specify the amount allocated to each account. Councilor Smith clarified his amendment to provide \$20,000 for gasoline and \$20,000 for diesel.

The City Clerk further explained that Council would first vote on the Resolution as amended. If the amendment failed, Council would proceed with consideration of the original resolution.

Discussion continued regarding the proposed reduction. Mayor Rossi reiterated his concern that reducing the transfer could require the City to identify funding from other budget lines, including recreational and community programming. He noted that certain expenditure accounts are offset by corresponding revenues and therefore would not necessarily represent available General Fund savings.

Councilor Simchik elaborated on the relationship between revenues and expenditures associated with some of the programs identified as potential areas for reduction, explaining that certain program expenses are offset by corresponding revenues. He noted that if a program does not occur, the associated revenue is also not received and the corresponding expenditure is not incurred; therefore, the expenditure balance would not necessarily represent General Fund savings available to offset fuel costs.

City Manager Lovell expressed concern regarding maintaining adequate fuel levels to ensure continuity of essential and emergency City operations, particularly in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency. Councilor Pagano shared these concerns, questioning whether the reduced transfer would be sufficient to meet the City's fuel needs throughout the remainder of the year and what process would be followed if additional funding became necessary.

Council then proceeded to vote on the motion to amend the budget transfers to \$20,000 for gasoline and \$20,000 for diesel, for a total transfer of \$40,000. Councilor Cimpi requested that a roll call vote be taken.

Councilor McHugh	YES
Councilor Cimpi	NO
Councilor Smith	YES
Councilor Jones	YES
Councilor Pagano	NO
Councilor Simchik	NO
Mayor Rossi	NO

MOTION TO AMEND RESULT: ☐ Passed ☒ Failed

Following the failure of the motion to amend, the Council proceeded to vote on Resolution 26-116 as originally presented, approving the budget transfers and amendments set forth in Resolution 26-113 of August 4, 2026.

Councilor McHugh	NO
Councilor Cimpi	YES
Councilor Smith	YES
Councilor Jones	NO
Councilor Pagano	YES
Councilor Simchik	YES
Mayor Rossi	YES

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

City Manager Lovell advised that he would remain following the meeting to answer questions and provide additional information to anyone wishing to speak with him.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

The meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk